

## Hardy et al. (2002): Some dare call it power

In this paper, Hardy et al. discusses how power is structured into organization design. The authors mention initially that power can be regarded from the starting point as the ability to get others to do what somebody wants them to and if necessary against their will. But this definition is not complete. Hardy et al. emphasize that there exist a multitude of different voices which speak to power. The two loudest ones are: the functionalist and the critical. In the first section of the paper the historical development of these two voices is described. In the second one it is evaluated how subsequent development built on these approaches. Main points are summarized in the following.

### The (two) founding voices

- Older tradition from Marx and Weber:
  - Focus on the existence of conflicting interests → Power as domination.
  - Power is embedded in social structures, which serve certain (but not all) interest groups.
- Younger tradition from the field of organizational studies
  - Taken for granted the way in which power is distributed in formal structures.
  - Examine how groups acquire and wield power not granted to them officially.

### Power and Interests in Organizations

- Marx: Class interests are structurally predetermined (follow from ownership & control of the means of production). → Two types of classes: Those who possess capital and those who do not.
- Weber: Power also derived from the knowledge of operations as much as from ownership (results in the subjective live-world of the organization). → Organizational members have some control and they reproduce the organizational structure.
- Power from the employer's point of view: Employee represents a capacity to labor which must be realized (condition of effective management).
- Gap between labor capacity and realization implies power. → Close the gap through the use of rule systems (bureaucracy).
- Potential source of resistance in the embodiment of labor power. (Harder to exercise strategies for workers than for dominant groups.)

### Power and Hierarchy in Organizations

- Legitimate power: Hierarchical structure in organizations from management view.
- Formal organization: Authority as a potential to influence based on position.
- Informal organization: Power as actual ability to influence based on various factors.
- Control of uncertainty as potential source of power (e.g. use of esoteric technical knowledge).
- Power in terms of strategic contingency: Strategically contingent sub-units are most powerful, because they are not dependent from other sub-units.
- Bases of power: Control of money, rewards and sanctions.
- Politics: Process of mobilizing power.

### Strategies of Domination: Manufacturing Consent

- People with the greatest needs participate in politics most actively.
- Why is there often little resistance of subordinate groups?
  - Prevent subordinates from participation through invocations of procedures and political routines (allows more powerful actors to determine outcomes behind the scenes).
  - Subordinates cannot imagine alternatives (natural or unchangeable).
  - Value the status quo as divinely ordained and beneficial.

- Power is most effective when it is unnecessary.
- Ability to define reality is used by dominant classes to prevent challenges from their position.
- Those who are powerless remain so, because they are ignorant to the ways of power (assessing the resources of the antagonist, procedures, rules, agenda setting, access, informal conduits and formal protocols).

### **Strategies of Management Defeating conflict**

- Definition of politics in the management literature: illegitimate use of power to achieve illegitimate ends.
- Assumption is that managers use power responsibly in pursuit of organizational goals, while everyone else uses it irresponsibly to resist their objectives.

### **Managing Meaning: the Creation of Legitimacy**

- Power is mobilized to give outcomes meanings (process of symbol construction and value use).
  - ➔ Political actions are instrumental and expressive.

### **Power and Discipline**

- 19th century: New techniques of disciplinary power (also for larger scale measures).
- 20th century: Power no longer a “resource” → Actors operated in existing structures (“web of power relations”).

### **Power and Gender in Organizations**

- Women were systematically subjected to power. → Demographic dominant gender became incorporated into the work roles.
- Organizational identity is defined through gender and the projection of forms of emotionality and sexuality.

### **Power, Resistance and Emancipation**

- Ruling as activity and implicated in authority and constituted by rules. → Opportunities for resistance.
- Resistance to discipline is irremediable; because of indexicality. → Control is never total.